



CONGRESSMAN CURT WELDON

*7th District Pennsylvania*



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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN CURT WELDON  
NAVY MODERNIZATION HEARING**

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I join my good friend and colleague, Duncan Hunter, in sharing the chair of today's hearing and in welcoming our witnesses. Secretary Douglas, Admiral Lautenbacher, General Oster, it's a pleasure to see you and I look forward to your testimony. The ranking member of the research and development subcommittee and my good friend, Owen Pickett, and I also look forward to working with Mr. Hunter and his ranking member on the Military Procurement subcommittee and our good friend, Norm Sisisky, and with our colleagues on both subcommittees as we continue our review of the Fiscal Year 1999 budget request.

All of us, I'm sure, share a common concern over the decline in defense spending during the last several years. Despite a slight increase in the funding requested for procurement and research and development, funding in the Department of Defense declines again this year, and is projected to decrease by an additional 14% over the FYDP.

Overall, in relative terms, the Navy is in a better position than the Army or the Air Force, both of whom experience declines in their research and development budget requests. The Navy's request increases to \$8.1 billion, an increase of 2.9% from FY98. However, the Navy's science and technology account is essentially flat with an approximately 7% increase in basic research and exploratory development being more than offset by an almost 10% reduction in advanced development.

The reduction in Navy advanced development parallels the same trend in advanced development programs in the other military departments and in the DOD as a whole. It raises some concerns relative to our ability to field advanced technology systems that would overmatch those of a future peer competitor which intelligence sources predict could emerge 10 to 15 years from now. These concerns are compounded when we recognize that the research and development accounts, and the science and technology accounts in particular, were the target of significant reductions in the FY98 budget process. We look forward to exploring these concerns and the impact of these budget trends on our future military forces.

While the Navy budget request for FY99 shows an increase and looks fairly robust (particularly when compared to the other military services), I am disturbed by the long term trends that I see. The Administration's budget submission to Congress continues to delay funding for modernization until after the turn of the century. The budget is driven (and justifiably so) by the need to maintain the quality of life for our servicemen and women. It is driven by increased operational tempo created by the deployment of our forces throughout the world in response to regional crises and to operations other than war. It is based on a series of what I believe are unwarranted assumptions regarding savings that will be made from decreases in the supporting infrastructure within the DOD and savings from acquisition reform. It includes a bow wave of force modernization and other initiatives that, quite frankly, I don't believe can be realized unless the budget's topline is increased.

The Navy's budget request reflects an emphasis on the acquisition of new platforms and capabilities: surface ships, aircraft carriers, submarines, airplanes, advanced munitions and missile systems, and advanced communications and intelligence systems. Some tough decisions are going to have to be made relative to these programs, because taken together with the modernization programs of the other services, they are simply unaffordable unless some fundamental changes are made.

The tactical aviation program for the Air Force and the Navy is an example. The projection for annual procurement costs of the F-22 advanced tactical fighter for the Air Force, the F/A-18E/F for the Navy, and the Joint Strike Fighter for the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marines grows from \$2.7 billion today to \$14 + billion in the outyears. I don't see where that sort of an increase in funding for the tactical aviation program is going to come from. Given the bow wave that exists for procurement of other weapon systems, not to mention the need to maintain the strong research and development program required for future systems, something is going to have to give. Some tough decisions are going to have to be made. Advanced technology will be needed to improve operational capabilities and reduce manufacturing costs and the cost of sustaining systems once they are fielded. We will need to maintain competition in order to ensure the best products from our research and development establishment and the most economical and cost-effective systems in production.

In regard to this last comment, Secretary Douglass, and as an example of these needs, I want to thank you for your personal commitment in assuring the establishment and support of the program for an alternative engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. I believe this program will be essential to the future affordability, and, indeed, to the performance of this aircraft.

